

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Greetings to all members and a belated "Happy New Year". Fran has made a reference in her letter to the fact that there have been no recent issues of butterflies, and maybe this is affecting stamps showing subjects from the natural world! This journal issue has only managed to have thirty-one pages, without fish and fossils. In fact, I believe the 'fossil' editor may have passed away, as I have not heard anything from him for some time. At the moment, we need associate editors for both paleontology and herpetology. We have had nothing on snakes and frogs for quite a while.

Some time ago, I was asked if I would be the speaker at a "Spring Grand Night" to be held by the Kitchener-Waterloo Philatelic Society and I thought I would relate some of my experiences with thematic philately. While researching a few facts for my talk, I was looking at some older copies of Topical Time from the 1970's and it was interesting to note in the "Units in Action" columns, that Biophilately consistently averaged 70 pages of data. What I remember from those issues was the fact that there were usually articles such as that submitted by Ron Berger in the last issue dealing with various aspects of biology on stamps. That seems to be what we have been lacking for some time and I would encourage our members to submit short (or long) articles on what they have been doing with their collections; research on a particular group or family; preparing an exhibit or other similar things.

Another fact that came to light was the average attendance of 25 people at the annual Biology Unit meetings, whereas in the last few years, we have averaged only around 10 attendees, which includes four of the officers. I begin to wonder if interest in this branch of thematic philately is declining, and this might be supported by the fact that there are at present only two exhibits out of twenty-three entered in the NTSS show which are on 'biological' subjects. At NTSS-2003 in Denver, there were twelve exhibits on biological subjects out of a show total of thirty-eight – just about one-third! Maybe I shall enter a new single frame exhibit to at least bring the number up to three!

While I am on the subject of exhibiting, CANEJ, the group which looks after exhibiting and judging for the American Philatelic Society has recently produced a new score sheet which no longer uses any kind of point system and will cover all the disciplines of the exhibiting field. In addition, it is now mandated that every exhibitor, whether present at the show or not, shall receive a written critique from one member of the judging panel. I am sure all exhibitors will welcome this development. There will hopefully be a couple of judging seminars at the show, at which exhibitors can ask questions about the new score sheet and judging system.

Until next time - Alan J. Hanks

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